



UPDATE

Montana Department of Commerce

September Enters, Major Wildfires Exit: Hallelujah!

We are knocking on un-burnt wood as we write this: MONTANA'S WILDFIRE SEASON IS OVER! Early September's cooler, wet weather helped end what was a very trying two months of extreme fire conditions and wildfire situations around the state. Thank you to the many Montanans and friends from other states who fought the fires, kept us safe, and protected Montana's precious landscapes. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!

What were the wildfires' impacts on Montana's tourism industry? Some businesses in the midst of the fires were devastated; they lost their season. Outside the fire zones, visitors didn't flee the state, but found other areas or activities to enjoy. How many visitors didn't come as a result of the fires? We don't know. We do know that despite national media coverage, only 5% of our 1-800-VISITMT callers asked about the fires. Most continued gathering Montana travel information and making plans to visit. We'll have a better picture of the fire's impact when we get the 2003 summer lodging tax collection reports after the first of the year.

A real bright spot in the 2003 Fire Season was the teamwork exhibited by

organizations and agencies across the state. Federal and state firefighters and their land management agency bosses embraced the need for good, balanced public information. In the Glacier Park area, National Park Service, Forest Service and firefighting officials went the extra mile (maybe ten miles) to get the word out that most of Glacier was still open and accessible to visitors. The public/private partnership developed between Flathead Valley/Glacier area tourism interests and the public

agencies is a model of how to work

together to make the best of a difficult situation. Fortunately, the model was at work across Montana where other diverse groups helped put the local and state wildfire situation in proper perspective. Congratulations to everyone involved in getting us through the challenges of Montana's 2003 Fire Season.



Film Production Guide

It's update time for the Montana Production Guide. The Montana Film Office is providing businesses and crew members an opportunity to renew their listing(s) in the guide so they can provide the most accurate information to production companies interested in Montana as a film location.

Production Support Services renewal forms were mailed in September, and

Montana crew member update forms go out in October. There are also advertising opportunities in the guide. Please respond with updates and ad requests by the specified deadline so the Film Office can meet print deadlines for the 2004 Montana Production Guide and update their database and website.

If you have questions, contact the Film Office's Maribeth Goodrich, 406-841-2876.

Meetings & Conventions

Group Tour Specialist Marlee Iverson has been on the meetings/conventions trade show circuit promoting Montana venues. In the last two months she's attended Meeting Professionals International in San Francisco, American Society of Association Executives in Honolulu, Affordable Meetings National in Washington D.C., and the Motivation Show in Chicago. All have gone well—especially Affordable Meetings where attendees showed a real strong interest in Montana. The trade show leads are available at <http://travelmontana.state.mt.us/OURPROGRAMS/MeetingsConventions.htm> or by contacting Marlee, 406-841-2895, miverson@state.mt.us

2003-04 Montana Winter Guide

Our Fall weather means that winter snows are just around the corner. Get your up-to-date ski or snowmobile information in the 2003-04 Montana Winter Guide. Add to your fun by checking out the 2003-04 Winter Calendar of Events and our winter web sites: wintermt.com, skimt.com and sledtherockies.org. For a copy of the Winter Guide or the Winter Calendar of Events, contact Travel Montana at 406-841-2870.

Did You Know?

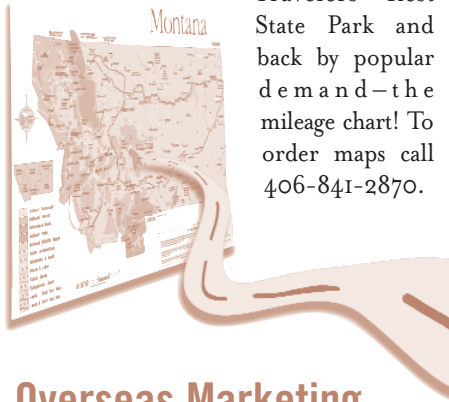
- The American Bus Association (ABA) lists 2 Montana events in its "100 Places To See In 2004"
 - L&C Festival: Great Falls, June 23-27, 2004
 - Victorian Ball & Heritage Days: Virginia City, Aug 14-15, 2004
- Montana Promotion Division Administrator Betsy Baumgart will serve on the Tourism Industry Association of America's (TIA) National Council of State Tourism Directors for one year.
- Montana Film Office Website www.montanafilm.com now has over 2000 fully searchable Montana locations available for film and commercial producers to browse.
- If you searched for "Montana" on Ebay.com, 4276 items would be listed (True on 9-15-03).

Montana Department of Commerce, Promotion Division, Betsy Baumgart, Administrator
406-841-2870 • TDD 406-841-2702 • fax 406-841-2871 • web: visitmt.com
industry intranet: travelmontana.state.mt.us

New Highway Map is Here!

There's no excuse for getting lost in Montana: the 2003-2004 State Highway Map has arrived! Updated features include Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, future sites of the Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame in Wolf Point and the State Firefighters' Memorial in Laurel,

Travelers' Rest State Park and back by popular demand—the mileage chart! To order maps call 406-841-2870.



Overseas Marketing

Almost 40 European tour operators participated in Rocky Mountain International's (RMI) Montana/Wyoming National Park FAM Sept. 30-Oct. 2. Participants included tour operators from Italy, France, Germany, the UK, Belgium, and the Netherlands, as well as two US receptive tour companies. RMI's FAM included stops in Gardiner, Helena, Gates of the Mountains, Seeley Lake, Whitefish, the Big Mountain, and Glacier National Park. Almost half the FAM participants continued on to Missoula visiting the Ninepipes Museum near Charlo, Missoula's

Smokejumper Center, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, A Carousel for Missoula, and the Holt Heritage Museum in Lolo.

In addition to the RMI Park FAM, Overseas Program Manager Pam Gosink reports a busy summer hosting/coordinating international media projects along with visits by the UK's Ranch America tour company and French tour operator, Jetset Voyages.

"Own" Your City Page

Want the best visitor information possible for your community and your business? Let Linda Elliott show you how. Linda belongs to the Thompson Falls Chamber of Commerce. This summer, *Montana Magazine* was doing an article about her community's Heritage Days event (July issue). The Chamber was buying an ad adjacent to the article and it referenced VISITMT.COM. Linda checked the website's Thompson Falls page based on data the community provided. She found it didn't do her town justice. Linda took the initiative to contact Web Content Specialist Jan Wirak to get the proper survey materials to hand out at Chamber meetings. Knowing that photos really enhance promotions, she encouraged businesses to submit pictures and, in some cases, she went out and took photos herself. She also reviewed the local attractions list for updates, suggested new ones that VISITMT.COM didn't have, and helped gather information about them. The result: a very nice, much improved feature on Thompson Falls in the website's Montana City pages: <http://visitmt.com/tripplanner/wheretogo/destinations.asp>

If you are inspired by Linda Elliott, your updates can be sent to the electronic promotions program, Jan Wirak, 841-2788 or jan@visitmt.com.



Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Calendar of Events

October

- 2-3 5th Annual Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Conference, Lewistown, 406-442-4141
- 6-7 TAC Meeting, Cottonwood Inn, Glasgow
- 7 Scenic-Historic Byways Advisory Council, Cottonwood Inn, Glasgow
- 8 CTAP Great Falls
- 15 CTAP Crow Agency
- 21 CTAP Wibaux
- 20-22 TIA Marketing Outlook Forum, Austin, TX

November

- 1-8 Sales Training/Press Reception, France; VISIT USA Showcase, Italy
- 14-19 NTA Convention, Charlotte, NC

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to:
travelmontana.state.mt.us



Travel Montana • Montana Film Office
Montana Department of Commerce

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